

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Videotaped Remarks to the African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum

August 5, 2009

Hello, everyone. I'm sorry I couldn't be there with you in person. But please know that for me and for my family, the memories from our recent trip to Ghana are still fresh. We will always remember the warmth of the Ghanaian people and the promise of Africa's potential.

I hope you're enjoying Kenya and the hospitality of the Kenyan people as much as I always have. When I first came in 1987, it was to discover the story of my father, who had grown up herding goats in the tiny village of Alego. When I visited as a Senator, I promised to work for a U.S. foreign policy that gives hope and opportunity to the people of this great continent.

Today it is my privilege to address you as President. And I want to repeat what I said 3 weeks ago in Accra: I do not see the countries and the peoples of Africa as a world apart, I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world. In our global economy, our economic fortunes are shared. And history shows that economic growth is among the greatest forces for progress in lifting people out of poverty.

That's why the African Growth and Opportunity Act is so important. That's why the AGOA Forum is so critical. By breaking down old barriers and opening new markets, we not only increase trade between our countries, we create powerful incentives for African entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, to create jobs, and build a brighter tomorrow for their children. That is what AGOA is all about.

So I thank President Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga for hosting this forum. And I pledge to you the full support and partnership of the United States. That is why my administration is represented there today by outstanding members of my Cabinet.

Over the last decade, AGOA has transformed the U.S.-African trade relationship. Opening America's doors to your exports has been good for Africa: creating African jobs, bringing millions of dollars of investment to sub-Saharan Africa, and sparking new trade across the continent. And it's been good for America, with African exporters seeking U.S. expertise, investments, and joint ventures. And today, we're your single largest trade partner.

At the same time, it's clear that U.S.-African trade has yet to realize its full potential. And if the current recession teaches us anything, it's that in a global economy not only the opportunities are shared, so are the risks. So there's so much more we can do together to plant the seeds of our economic recovery and to achieve lasting prosperity.

Only Africans can unlock Africa's potential. It will take your entrepreneurship, your innovation. And only Africans can ensure the good governance and strong institutions upon which development depends. Open markets alone are not enough. Development requires the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and an atmosphere that welcomes investment. And I encourage every country to set concrete goals for overcoming the obstacles to economic growth.

And to all Africans who are pursuing a future of hope and opportunity, know this: You have a partner and a friend in the United States. That's why we'll work with you to develop strong institutions, clear legal frameworks, and the regulations and infrastructure that help bring new products to market. That's why we'll work together to harness Africa's vast natural

resources to generate clean, renewable energy for export. That's why I've pledged substantial increases in our foreign assistance, not simply to help people scrape by, but to unleash transformational change. And that's why we've joined with our international partners to promote food security by investing \$20 billion in agricultural development, not simply to hand out American food, but to promote African self-sufficiency.

These are the things we can do together to unleash the skills and talents of our people and to ensure our common prosperity in the 21st century. And if we do, I'm confident that Africans can live their dreams from Nairobi to Accra, from Lagos to Kigali, from Kinshasa to Cape Town.

Thank you for your work at this important forum. Enjoy Nairobi.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped on July 31 at approximately 2:35 p.m. in the Red Room at the White House for later transmission to the forum meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. In his remarks, he referred to President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Amolo Odinga of Kenya. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum, videotaped remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Kibaki, Mwai; Odinga, Raila Amolo.

Subjects: Africa : African Growth and Opportunity Act of 2000; Africa : International assistance; Africa : Relations with U.S.; Africa : Trade with U.S.; Africa : U.S. assistance; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Ghana : President Obama's visit; Kenya : President; Kenya : Prime Minister.

DCPD Number: DCPD200900622.